

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

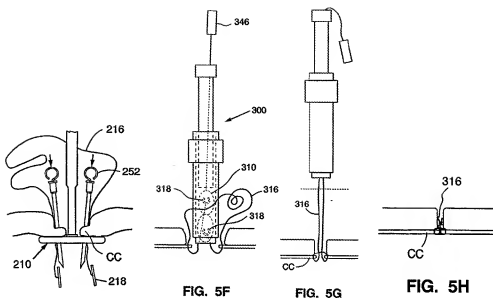
In this Amendment, claims 1, 4 and 13 are amended. Claims 15-16 are added and find support at Figs. 4 and 5 of the present application. Accordingly, claims 1-16 are pending in the application.

Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1, 4 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chin* (US 5,391,182), in view of *Young* (US 4,906,231). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection for the reason(s) discussed below.

Claim 1 is directed to a suture assisting and *maintaining* apparatus including “a loop suture being threaded through skin around a wide open wound” and “a tightening member for gathering both ends of the threaded loop suture at one point in order to tighten the threaded loop suture and for exerting a pressure of wound tightening force evenly on skin.” Applicant respectfully submits that none of the applied art disclose or suggest the above claimed features.

Specifically, *Chin* discloses an apparatus for suturing two points of facial tissue for deep puncture wounds as shown in the figures below, especially, at Fig. 5H of *Chin*, that is, closure of deep puncture openings. However, the claimed subject matter is a suture assisting and *maintaining* apparatus including a loop suture being threaded through skin around a wide open wound, the loop suture penetrates across and tightens the entire wide open wound (skin) as shown in Fig. 1 of the present application. Therefore, *Chin* fails to disclose or suggest the claimed feature. Also, *Young* does not cure the deficiency of *Chin*.



Figs. 4E and 5F-5H of *Chin*

Further, Applicant respectfully submits that none of the applied art disclose or suggest the claimed feature of claim 1, i.e., a tightening member gathering both ends of the threaded loop suture at one point. According to the Office Action, a suture 316 and a flexible membrane 310 of *Chin* are regarded as the claimed loop suture and tightening member, respectively. However, as disclosed in Fig. 5D and column 4, lines 58-60 of *Chin*, two ends of the suture 316 are attached to a pair of needles 314 and anchors 318 without being gathered by the flexible membrane 310. In other words, the flexible membrane 310 does not gather both ends of the suture 316, therefore cannot be regarded as the claimed tightening member.

Also, a central cord 328 and a reinversion cord 330 of *Chin* cannot be regarded as the claimed tightening member. The reason is that only one end of the central cord 328/reinversion cord 330 is attached to the flexible membrane 310 as illustrated in Fig. 5C of *Chin*. *Young* does not disclose or suggest the claimed feature.

Accordingly, for at least the reasons above, claim 1 is patentable over the art and this rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 2 and 3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chin* in view of *Young* and further in view of *Yoon* (US 5,478,353). Claims 5 and 6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chin* in view of *Young* and further in view of *Akerfeldt* (US 6,860,895). Claims 7, 8 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chin* in view of *Young* and further in view of *Murray* (US 5,190,526). Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chin* in view of *Young* and further in view of *Murray* and *Yoon*. Claims 11, 12 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Chin* in view of *Young* and further in view of *Goodin* (US 4,723,938).

Dependent claims 2-14 depend upon claim 1 and should be patentable over the art for the reasons advanced with respect to claim 1. The rejections should be withdrawn.

New claims

New claims 15 and 16 which depend on claim 1 should be patentable for the reasons advanced with respect to claim 1 as well as on their own merits.

For example, claim 15 recites that the loop suture is a multiple punctured purse-string type loop suture. However, the suture 316 of *Chin* is 2-point anchoring suture.

Claim 16 recites that the tightening member defines an interface between skin and the apparatus for distribution and buffering of even-pressure, which is not disclosed or suggested by the applied art. In particular, the flexible membrane 310 of *Chin* is positioned inside the sheath and is withdrawn into the sheath by pulling the knob. That is, the flexible membrane 310 of *Chin* cannot act as an interface.

Conclusion

Each of Examiner's rejections has been traversed. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that all the claims are now in condition for allowance. Early and favorable indication of allowance is courteously solicited.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 07-1337 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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